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SOCIO-ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE

Socio-economic advantage and disadvantage can be defined as people's access to material and social resources, and their ability to participate in society. This article will explore how this concept can be analysed using Census data through one of the Socio-Economic Indexes for Areas (SEIFA), the Index of Relative Socio-Economic Advantage and Disadvantage (IRSAD). SEIFA are a set of indexes created from summarising the diverse population, family and household characteristics related to socio-economic advantage and disadvantage collected in the Census of Population and Housing, and provide a ranking of areas in Australia.

The 2016 SEIFA IRSAD is a general measure of both relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage at the area level. It uses a range of different Census variables including income, education, employment, occupation and housing characteristics. An area with a low score on this index reflects relatively high levels of socio-economic disadvantage, whilst an area with a high score on this index indicates high levels of advantage. For more information see 2016 SEIFA.

It is important to remember that indexes are assigned to geographic areas, not individuals. For example, it is possible for a relatively advantaged person to reside in an area which may have a low score on some or all of the indexes. It is also possible for there to be pockets of advantage and disadvantage within a single area.

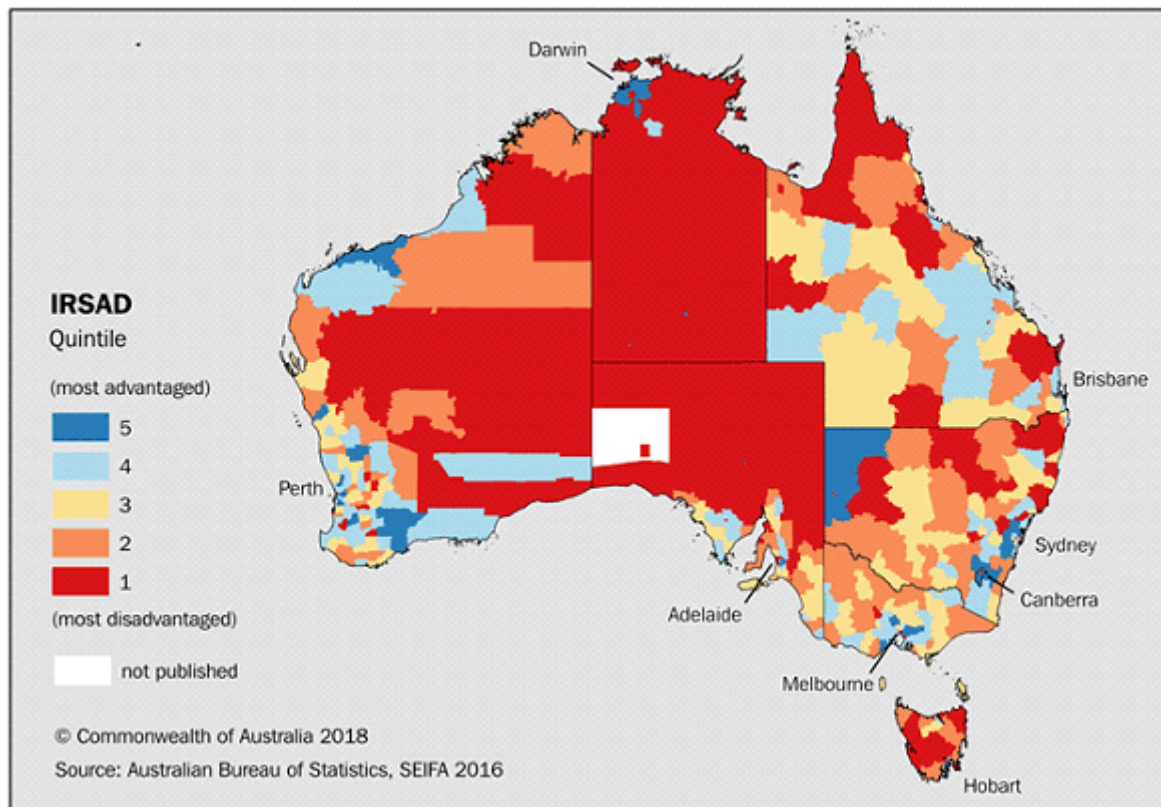
In this article, the 2016 SEIFA IRSAD scores for all areas have been divided into quintiles, where quintile 1 contains the lowest 20% of scores for the most disadvantaged areas and quintile 5 contains the highest 20% of scores for the most advantaged areas.

ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA

Advantaged and disadvantaged areas are spread throughout Australia. The most advantaged Local Government Areas (LGAs) (quintile 5, or top 20%) tend to be clustered around capital cities and selected coastal areas. The most disadvantaged LGAs (quintile 1) tend to be in regional and rural areas.

Location can influence the range of opportunities, goods and services available to satisfy an individual's needs and lifestyle for them and their family. This doesn't necessarily mean that all people living in rural areas are disadvantaged, only that their lifestyle and living arrangements are different to those living in a city.

INDEX OF RELATIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE QUINTILES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS



For an interactive version of this map and maps for other geographic areas, see SEIFA interactive maps.

TEN MOST ADVANTAGED LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS

The 10 most advantaged LGAs in Australia in 2016 are located around the North and Eastern waters of Sydney Harbour and in coastal Perth. Nine of these 10 areas were also in the most advantaged areas in 2011.

TEN MOST ADVANTAGED LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS, INDEX OF RELATIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE

Rank	Local Government Area	Usual Resident Population
1	Ku-ring-gai (NSW)	118 053
2	Mosman (NSW)	28 475
3	Woollahra (NSW)	54 240
4	Cottesloe (WA)	7 597
5	Peppermint Grove (WA)	1 636
6	Nedlands (WA)	21 121
7	North Sydney (NSW)	67 658
8	Lane Cove (NSW)	36 051
9	Cambridge (WA)	26 783
10	Hunters Hill (NSW)	13 999

Source: ABS, SEIFA 2016

People living in the top 10 most relatively advantaged LGAs in 2016, on average, tended to be middle-aged, had high levels of education, worked in more skilled occupations and had high incomes.

Ku-ring-gai was the most advantaged LGA in Australia in 2016. It is located in the upper north shore region of Sydney and its suburbs include Killara, Gordon, St Ives and Pymble. According to the 2016 Census, the median age of people living in Ku-ring-gai was 41 years. Housing in the area was relatively large and expensive: 53% of dwellings had four or more bedrooms in 2016, the median monthly mortgage repayment was \$3,000 and the median weekly rent was \$650. The median weekly household income was also high at \$2,640. Almost half the adult population in this area had a bachelor degree or above (48%) and 40% were professionals. In combination, these indicators reflect a high level of socio-economic advantage in this area.

TEN MOST DISADVANTAGED AREAS LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS

The 10 most disadvantaged LGAs throughout Australia were in Queensland and the Northern Territory. Cherbourg in Queensland was identified as being the most disadvantaged area – this area is approximately 200 kilometres inland from the Sunshine Coast. This was followed by West Daly (around 200 km south of Darwin) and Belyuen (on the eastern side of Cox Peninsula) in the Northern Territory. Eight of these 10 areas were also identified as being the most disadvantaged areas in 2011.

TEN MOST DISADVANTAGED LOCAL GOVERNMENT AREAS, INDEX OF RELATIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE

Rank	Local Government Area	Usual Resident Population
1	Cherbourg (Qld)	1 269
2	West Daly (NT)	3 166
3	Belyuen (NT)	164
4	Woorabinda (Qld)	962
5	Central Desert (NT)	3 677
6	Aurukun (Qld)	1 269
7	Yarrabah (Qld)	2 559
8	Doomadgee (Qld)	1 405
9	Napranum (Qld)	957
10	Palm Island (Qld)	2 446

Source: ABS, SEIFA 2016

On average, people living in the 10 most relatively disadvantaged LGAs in 2016 were young, had high levels of housing rentals, had low rental costs and had lower incomes.

Cherbourg was the most disadvantaged LGA in 2016. This is a discrete community, with 99% of its residents reporting they were of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin in the 2016 Census. The median age of people living in Cherbourg was 21 years. The median weekly household income was \$775. All homes in the community were rented according to the 2016 Census, with a low median weekly rent of \$100. Two in three (65%) homes had no access to the internet from the dwelling and 46% of households did not have a registered motor vehicle, both well below the Australian figures. Some 17% of adults were employed, most commonly working as community and personal service workers. In combination, these indicators reflect a high level of socio-economic disadvantage relative to other areas.

STATES AND TERRITORIES

According to the 2016 Census, the Australian Capital Territory had the highest proportion of

people living in relatively advantaged areas (55% in quintile 5) and the lowest proportion in the most disadvantaged areas (0.7% in quintile 1). These figures reflect the same results that were observed for 2011 and 2006. Previous research indicated that disadvantaged people in this territory were more dispersed across advantaged areas than most other States and Territories (see Research Paper: Socio-Economic Indexes For Areas: Getting a Handle on Individual Diversity Within Areas, Sep 2011 (1351.0.55.036)).

In contrast, Tasmania had the lowest proportion of people living in the most advantaged areas (4.6%) and the highest proportion of people living in the most disadvantaged areas (37%).

PROPORTION OF PERSONS BY INDEX OF RELATIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE QUINTILES(a) BY STATE OF USUAL RESIDENCE(b)

	New South Wales	Victoria	Queensland	South Australia	Western Australia	Tasmania	Northern Territory	Australian Capital Territory
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
Quintile 1(c)	19.1	16.2	21.4	25.7	13.3	37.2	23.5	0.7
Quintile 2	18.8	18.0	22.2	25.1	18.4	26.1	11.1	3.5
Quintile 3	17.1	21.4	21.7	22.4	22.9	18.3	19.8	12.1
Quintile 4	17.4	23.7	20.7	17.9	24.0	13.8	25.2	29.1
Quintile 5(d)	27.6	20.8	14.0	8.9	21.4	4.6	20.5	54.6
Total(b)	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) SEIFA IRSAD quintile derived for all areas in Australia at SA1 level.

(b) Excludes Other Territories and SA1 areas where a quintile was not assigned.

(c) Quintile 1 are the most relatively disadvantaged areas.

(d) Quintile 5 are the most relatively advantaged areas.

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016

CULTURAL DIVERSITY

Country of birth

The Australian population has a diverse mix of different cultures, with 26% of Australia's population born overseas. The 2016 Census found that people who were born overseas were slightly more likely to live in the most advantaged areas (24% in quintile 5) than people born in Australia (20% in quintile 5). Similarly, a slightly smaller proportion of people born overseas lived in the most disadvantaged areas in 2016 (17%) than people born in Australia (19%). People born overseas were more likely to live in capital cities than Australian-born people (see Cultural Diversity in Australia).

There were greater differences in advantage and disadvantage for individual countries of birth. Over 30% of people who were born in China, South Africa and Malaysia lived in advantaged areas and less than 10% in disadvantaged areas. This compares with a high proportion of people born in Vietnam (40%) living in disadvantaged areas and only a small proportion lived in advantaged areas (11%).

PROPORTION OF PERSONS BY INDEX OF RELATIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE QUINTILES(a) BY COUNTRY OF BIRTH(b)

	Quintile 1(c)	Quintile 2	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5(d)	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%

Born in Australia	19.0	20.1	20.4	20.2	20.2	100
Born Overseas	16.6	17.7	19.5	22.2	24.1	100
10 Most common overseas countries of birth						
England	14.4	17.4	19.6	21.9	26.8	100
New Zealand	17.8	20.7	21.4	20.5	19.6	100
China (excludes SARs and Taiwan)	7.1	11.5	19.5	29.4	32.5	100
India	13.9	18.7	22.9	24.2	20.3	100
Philippines	20.9	23.1	22.3	18.8	14.9	100
Vietnam	40.3	20.3	14.7	13.7	11.1	100
Italy	14.0	19.4	21.1	23.3	22.3	100
South Africa	5.9	11.7	17.5	25.3	39.6	100
Malaysia	7.6	11.3	17.8	29.2	34.1	100
Scotland	15.7	17.9	19.4	22.2	24.9	100

(a) SEIFA IRSAD quintile derived for all areas in Australia at SA1 level.

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(c) Quintile 1 are the most relatively disadvantaged areas.

(d) Quintile 5 are the most relatively advantaged areas.

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016

Language Spoken at Home

People who spoke English at home and those who spoke another language had similar proportions living in the most disadvantaged areas (18% and 19% respectively in quintile 1). About one-fifth of each group lived in the most advantaged areas (quintile 5).

However, there was a difference between the non-English languages spoken at home. Approximately one in three people who spoke Mandarin or Cantonese at home lived in relatively advantaged areas (33% and 32% respectively). In contrast, higher proportions of people who spoke Vietnamese (42%) or Arabic (31%) lived in the most disadvantaged areas. Of those who spoke Australian Indigenous languages at home, 86% lived in the most disadvantaged areas compared with 1.2% in advantaged areas.

PROPORTION OF PERSONS BY INDEX OF RELATIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE QUINTILES(a) BY LANGUAGE SPOKEN AT HOME(b)

	Quintile 1(c) %	Quintile 2 %	Quintile 3 %	Quintile 4 %	Quintile 5(d) %	Total(b) %
Speaks English only	18.2	19.9	20.4	20.4	21.1	100
Speaks language other than English	19.3	18.0	19.2	21.8	21.7	100
10 Most common non-English languages spoken at home						
Mandarin	7.0	11.2	18.8	29.7	33.3	100
Arabic	30.8	26.8	17.8	14.4	10.2	100
Cantonese	10.8	12.8	18.2	26.2	32.0	100
Vietnamese	42.5	20.7	14.4	12.7	9.7	100
Italian	12.1	18.3	21.3	24.3	24.0	100
Greek	9.8	14.5	20.8	28.5	26.3	100
Hindi	12.5	18.0	21.2	24.4	23.8	100
Spanish	14.9	16.9	18.8	22.5	27.0	100
Punjabi	20.7	24.0	25.1	18.5	11.7	100
Tagalog	20.7	24.0	23.1	18.5	13.7	100

(a) SEIFA IRSAD quintile derived for all areas in Australia at SA1 level.

(b) Excludes Other Territories and SA1 areas where a quintile was not assigned.

(c) Quintile 1 are the most relatively disadvantaged areas.

(d) Quintile 5 are the most relatively advantaged areas.

Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander People

People who identified as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander origin were significantly more likely to live in disadvantaged areas (48% lived in quintile 1) than non-Indigenous people (18%) based on the SEIFA IRSAD. Overall, 5.3% of Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people lived in areas of high relative advantage (quintile 5), compared with 22% of non-Indigenous people.

PROPORTION OF PERSONS BY INDEX OF RELATIVE SOCIO-ECONOMIC ADVANTAGE AND DISADVANTAGE QUINTILES(a) BY INDIGENOUS STATUS(b)

	Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander %	Non-Indigenous %
Quintile 1(c)	48.0	17.6
Quintile 2	21.8	19.4
Quintile 3	15.0	20.3
Quintile 4	9.9	21.0
Quintile 5(d)	5.3	21.7
Total(b)	100	100

(a) SEIFA IRSAD quintile derived for all areas in Australia at SA1 level.

(b) Excludes Other Territories and SA1 areas where a quintile was not assigned.

(c) Quintile 1 are the most relatively disadvantaged areas.

(d) Quintile 5 are the most relatively advantaged areas.

Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2016

EXPLANATORY INFORMATION

The 2016 SEIFA is available on the ABS website. This includes easy-to-use features and data visualisation tools, including interactive maps.

SEIFA is primarily a tool for investigating the relative advantage and disadvantage of areas at a point in time. Comparing changes over time is possible, however these types of analyses can be difficult to interpret correctly. SEIFA is a relative measure and therefore provides no information on changes over time at a national level.

Data for the 10 most disadvantaged and advantaged LGA and Suburbs for each State and Territory can be found in the Downloads tab at the top of the page.

SEIFA quintiles are based on all areas ordered from lowest to highest score, then the lowest 20% of areas are given a quintile number of one, the next lowest 20% of areas are given a quintile number of two and so on, up to the highest 20% of areas which are given a quintile number of five. For SEIFA IRSAD, quintile one contains the most disadvantaged areas and quintile five contains the most advantaged areas.

Most information in this article is sourced from the SEIFA product linked above. However, there are several sections in this article that describe characteristics of people within these areas (e.g. cultural diversity), using the 2016 Census.

Census data can be used in conjunction with SEIFA data in many different ways to identify the different characteristics of people living in areas of high or low relative socio-economic advantage and disadvantage. Care should be taken when undertaking analysis as comparisons based on Census data used in the derivation of the indexes can confound the interpretation of the results.

2016 SEIFA data is available through Census TableBuilder Pro, this provides the opportunity to combine Census data with SEIFA characteristics.

For more information about 2016 Census data release and products, go to www.abs.gov.au/census.

For definitions of Census data items, see the Census of Population and Housing: Census Dictionary, 2016 (cat. no. 2901.0).

For information on the geographies use in this article, see the Australian Statistical Geographic Standard (ASGS).

Census data in this article is based on usual residence Census counts and excludes overseas visitors who are in Australia for less than a year.

People who did not state their Country of birth, Indigenous status or Language spoken at home have been excluded from the statistics on cultural diversity in this article.

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